CAMP WHITE
# GRENADE II

"Preserving the Past for the Future"

VOLUME 6, NO. 1 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMP WHITE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION MARCH 2001

# OTHER LOSSES

It was Friday, July 7th, 1944. The sunny afternoon was clear and warm and Paula Loop had just taken off from the Medford, Oregon Army Air Field. She was en route to Seattle continuing north, piloting a BT-13-B on one of many ferrying flights she had made since graduating from the Women's Auxiliary Service Pilot's School in May of 1943.

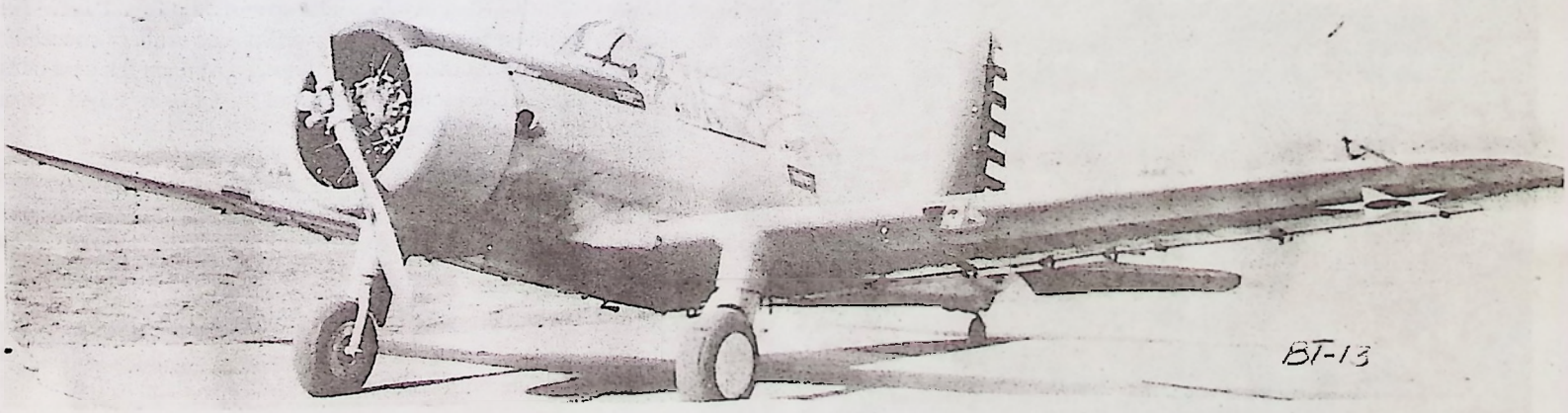
In 1942, civilian aircraft had been grounded west of the Cascade Mountains and was restricted to the area east of Highway 97. The Army had leased much of the Medford Municipal Airport thus requiring civilian aircraft to be moved to Klamath Falls. As a result, the only airplanes Paula had encountered were commercial and other military aircraft. The Medford Army Air Field offered a nice break and a convenient refueling point. It had become a popular stop for pilots up and down the West Coast when the Jackson County Council of Defense opened a small canteen, which provided meals, recreation and beds for tired aviators.

Paula was one of approximately 25,000 applicants for WASP training. Over the twenty-eight-month life span of the program, only 1,074 would complete the course. Of these, thirty-eight would lose their lives to air crashes. The training was difficult with very few advantages. Female pilots were paid two-thirds of that of their male counterparts and served in the capacity of civilian employees rather than members of the military. The benefits were so restricted that members of the WASP program had to take up a collection in order to send the body of Jeanne Lewellen, one of it's pilots, home after she was killed in an air crash.

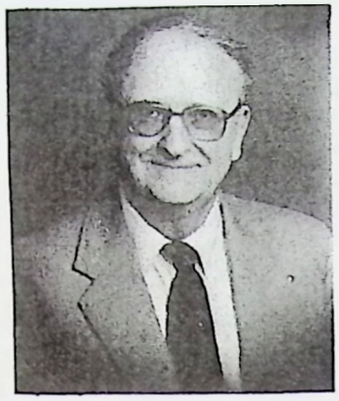
This did not curtail their devotion in providing air service for the military. They not only transported aircraft but towed targets. Many of their male counterparts refused to fly these very dangerous assignments. On more than one occasion the target towing aircraft became the target. Two WASPs had lost their lives when the engines failed on the towing aircraft. Many of the tow planes were hit by fire.

WASP training was conducted at Avenger Field near Sweetwater, Texas. Trainees were housed in barracks that provided for six women to a room. Each had a footlocker and a standing closet. A small latrine and shower was made

*(continued on inside page)*



# Commander's Corner



## TAPS

*If you know of a member passing, please contact us and we will add them to our Taps.*

**William Alex Gates**
**"B" Battery, 347th FABN, 91st Divisio**
**November 16, 2000**
**Rolland Pitzke**
**"I" Company, 363rd Regiment, 91st Divis**
**January 2001**

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PAST COMMANDER

Dear Friends and Members,

As most of you know, each year your Officers of the Association change and the Commander can only run three terms. My term started in 1998, so this year is time for me to leave this office. I was voted in as EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR and hope to be of some help in advising our new Commander and new officers on the Board of Trustees of the Camp White Historical Association. I feel we have a very strong Board of Trustees. During my tenure of duty I met some great people and made a lot of friends that had a great interest in Military History and the soldiers that trained at Camp White, Oregon.

We accomplished a lot of projects to improve our Museum and they will continue on as they have been turned over to the new Commander. Sorry the video of Camp White History never got completed because of a short fall of money, but we hope to have it completed this year.

I shall always be grateful to you for your loyal support of the Association and me, and for your help in making a success of our programs. I wish all of you good health.

Sincerely,

Al Inlow
Executive Director

### A MESSAGE FROM THE NEW COMMANDER

The object of my life is to serve God and my country. I appreciate the opportunity to serve as your Commander.

I have three projects in mind:

1. To construct a display to commemorate the distribution by the Gideons of over 50 million testaments to nurses and other members of the Military.

2. To make a VHS documentary on the Gideon Nurse/ Medical Testament. In 1942-43, 3,100,000 white Testaments were given out, the most distributed any one year, before or since. A white Bible, with the name in gold, was presented to each member of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, to the U.S. Supreme Court, the President's Cabinet and to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, himself, as well as to the Governor of each state. Total given to the Military from 1940 to 2000 exceeds 50 million.

3. To assist Del Hussey, Curator, in making a video of Camp White's construction, cadre troops arrival and training of combat troops . The video will be of high enough quality that it can be aired on TV (PBS etc.) and be a sale item for the Museum.

Sincerely,

Norman R. Matteson
Commander

### The 91st Division Artillery

The 91st Division arrived at Anzi after the action there. Althoug they were told they'd be the "indefinitely", the very next da Lieutenant General Mark W. Cla welcomed them into the Fifth Arm In a matter of hours, they were their way to the front.

Resistance on the way to Rome w sparse. The Germans rapidly wi drew north from Rome until T quinia, where a bicycle battalion v so quickly overrun that hundreds bicycles were abandoned. For a f days, a man on foot was a rare sig but within a week they had all be abandoned. During June of '44 t Germans continued to retreat nor with our artillery making dai progress.

***The First Star*** Leghorn, Ital third largest port was the next ob tive. The obvious route, up the co al plain was too strongly defenc So, the artillery was shuttled up wards the Arno River. It was du this push that the 91st Division A lery functioned as a unit against t enemy for the first time. The Ger defenders of Chianni found themse under a new type of fire, T-O-T, or Tir Target, when all shells fired hit simu eously. The town was peaceful and quiet one minute, and being blown to and back the next. But Chianni would not be so easily taken. Twelve en tanks posed a serious threat to the push. A well-placed artillery concentr knocked out one tank and sent the others scattering. At 3 am the next mo after a 30 minute barrage they found that most of the German's had retre during the night to reinforce the Gothic Line.

Pushing on towards the Arno the 91st was met by serious opposition at sacco, 25 tanks including the Wehrmacht's newest and most formidable m Vigilant observation and prompt artillery fire took Ponsacco, and the fire c the enemy who quickly retreated across the river.

Just south of the Arno lay Pisa, flat and unremarkable except for its l tower, which the enemy used as an observation post. Only direct orders fr commanding general of the Fifth Army saved Pisa's one claim to fame.


# THE GRENADE II

**The *Grenade II* is the official newsletter of the Camp White Historical Association and Museum.**

**Executive Editor.....Norman R. Matteson**
**Managing Editor.....Ann Griffin**
**Printed by .....Kinko's**

**The *Grenade* accepts suggestions and contributions from readers.**
**If you have a story idea or appropriate event to promote, write**
**Ann Griffin at PO Box 2373, White City, OR 97503**

## OTHER LOSSES *(continued)*

available for every 12 students. The instruction was difficult, which was reflected in the failure rate. Washout rates for the program increased from 26% in 1943 to 47% in 1944. Because Paula had learned to fly in 1940 and served as a Link Trainer Instructor for British cadets in 1942, she was prepared for the challenge.

The program had continually been under fire from its inception. Representative Robert Ramspeck, D., Georgia, had declared that he had received many complaints about the WASP program advising that male pilots were being left idle as females were being trained at the cost of $20,000 each. He felt that if these complaints were true then "it is certainly a waste of the taxpayers money to train the girls..."

Under any circumstance, Paula had a job to do and these issues were not of her immediate concern. She knew the job had its risks, twenty five WASPs had died since the program began in August of 1943. Six had died in the last month alone. As she passed near the Umpqua Divide into the unfamiliar Tiller area, she began to experience strong wind gusts and the plane began to bounce up and down. This was expected, as the day was warm. What was not expected was a sudden down draft on the back-side of a slope which forced the airplane to suddenly drop.

At 3:30 PM Lowell Ash, a fireguard stationed at Trail, discovered a fire in the Railroad Gap District. Subsequent investigation revealed that Paula's plane had lost altitude and had struck several trees before crashing. Forest Service and Military personnel would arrive at the scene at 7:30 PM.

On Sunday, July 9th, the Medford Mail Tribune would carry a four-paragraph article describing where and when the crash had occurred but like so many accidents that happened during the war, security limited the amount of information that was made available.

CRASH SITE PHOTOGRAPH

Paula's body was moved to Camp White. She would be shipped home without military honors. Her mother, Nattie A. Loop would not receive a flag draped coffin nor any of the courtesies extended to active duty military personnel. There were no death benefits as WASPs were not considered veterans. Paula was 27 years old.

As is true with so many non-combat military casualties, I thought that this one would be commemorated only by the brief news article in the Mail Tribune describing the crash. But fortunately, Paula Loop would not be forgotten. On April 14, 1980, a dormitory was dedicated to the memory of Paula at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City.

*Del Hussey*

***The 91st Division Artillery (continued)*** *** The Second Star ***

The first half of August was marked by no historically significant battles. What was happening was largely an Artillery Duel, a very one-sided one, thanks to American air superiority. The American Artillery had small spotter planes, which could easily soar from sunup to sundown adjusting artillery fire on anything moving behind German lines. This prevented the German's from day-fighting, the muzzle flashes were too easy to spot. Night firing was inaccurate and only harassing in nature.

Around the middle of August units were moved one at a time to a bivouac around San Gimignano. There, new replacements joined units to fill gaps in the ranks. Intensive training in storming a prepared and fortified position, brushing up on artillery techniques, mines and booby traps, physical training and some new tricks were demonstrated. There was also time for recreation, including visits from Red Cross girls and USO entertainers.

Near the end of August, the 91st was ordered to get ready to fight across the Arno, only to find the enemy had retreated to the next northward body of water, the Sieve River. Once they were ready for that fight they found the opposing forces had again withdrawn. Battles were consistently avoided as the Germans continued to retreat under the cover of darkness. The weather was not as cooperative. Fall rains turned roads to mud and the biggest delays to forward movement became Mother Nature's. Of course, this didn't last. By September 13th forward movement slowed and it was realized that the Gothic Line had been reached.

*(continued on back page)*

# SPECIAL EVENTS CALENDAR

March 7th- Anniversary of Crossing of the Rhine (1945) Movie Showing "Bridge at Remaggen" at 1pm in meeting room, Building 243 Room 254.
April 14th- Awareness Day-Southern Oregon Military Vehicle Collector's Club showing after Pear Blossom Parade, WWII era music, special displays, food, etc. Museum open 11 to 4
May 28th- Memorial Day- Parade in White City, Services in Eagle Point, fair on Dom Grounds, Museum open 11 to 4
June 14th- Flag Day- History of American Flags, Movie Showing "Many Faces of Old Glory" 1 pm in the Theater, patriotic music, etc.

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***The 91st Division Artillery (continued)***

The taking of Mount Calvi and Monticelli would start the push through the Futa Pass and the Gothic Line. To accomplish this the 363rd Division Commander threw away the book. Concentrated and complicated attacks were necessary. Montecelli's defenses were intricate. Every 100 yards a 25-foot wide barbed wire barricade, pillboxes of concrete, logs, and dirt which afforded each other protection, and heavily mined ravines. Progress was very slow and costly, much blood was spilled. After four days, our forces were 300 yards short of the peak. The 347th FAB laid down a perfect rolling barrage that blasted its way like a curtain of destruction up the final yards. By the time the attacking company of infantrymen made it to the top there were only 8 men. The Germans were not going to give up lightly. Constant artillery barrages were necessary to deter counterattacks. 230 Germans died trying to keep Monticelli, over 110 more were taken prisoner. Over 20,000 rounds of 105 mm shells had been fired by 91st Division guns in the taking of Monticelli alone.

The valley between Mount Calvi and Monticelli had no roads. Division engineers had been kept busy replacing blown bridges, removing treacherous minefields, and maintaining roads. To keep the infantry supplied they had to blast, chip, and scrape out first a trail for mules, then working day and night they widened it to allow jeeps to pass. Still, past Coppo only mules could pass. Strong-backed, sure-footed Missouri mules kept the men supplied with food, medicine, and ammunition. The 361st, with the 916th in support, were to take the valley which eventually elevated enough to rate being called Hill 844 and then Hill 856. Although the Germans could observe and fire from 3 sides the 361st forged ahead. Obstacles with 20 feet of barbed wire, 20-foot minefields, and another 20 feet of barbed wire were slowly breached with bangalore torpedoes, engineers disarming mine after mine, and more bangalore torpedoes. Inching along, the 361st took the valley and Hills 844 and 856 during the same 4 days the 363rd took Monticelli. Following a smashing artillery rolling barrage they took three more hills and were soon overlooking the Santerno River.

**CAMP WHITE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION & MUSEUM**
**P.O. BOX 2373, WHITE CITY, OREGON 97503**

# Camp White Military Museum

## At The VA Dom in White City

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Building 200, Second Floor

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Regular Hours
Monday thru Saturday
10:00 – 3:00
(Closed on July 4th)

Free Admission
Donations Gratefully Accepted

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For further information Call 826-2111 Ext. 3674